

Research on the Inheritance, Development and Value of Qingyang Long Opera Culture

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Qingyang Long Opera, a cultural epitome of Gansu Province, through the lens of cultural ecology. Employing qualitative research methods including documentary analysis and field investigations, it systematically deconstructs the historical evolution, stylized performance paradigms, and vocal aesthetic characteristics of this traditional form. The research identifies Long Opera as a vital carrier of cultural genes, confronting contemporary challenges such as inefficient cultural capital conversion and intergenerational transmission gaps under the tension between globalization and localization. A three-dimensional framework encompassing "cultural memory-living heritage transmission-innovative transformation" is proposed, with practical pathways involving digital archiving, educational institutionalization, and cultural tourism integration. The findings underscore that Long Opera's sustainability not only safeguards regional cultural diversity but also constitutes an indispensable component in reconstructing China's operatic cultural genealogy, offering paradigmatic insights into cultivating cultural consciousness and shaping contemporary identity.

KEYWORDS

Cultural ecology; Qingyang Long Opera; Cultural genes; Living heritage transmission

1 Introduction

Long Opera, as a treasure in the land of Gansu, carries the deep historical and cultural heritage of Qingyang area. It is not only a kind of artistic presentation, but also a vivid mapping of the emotional world, values and life pattern of Gansu people. In the wave of globalization and modernization, the in-depth study of Qingyang Long Opera culture is not only the need to protect the local cultural heritage, but also the key to enrich the cultural treasury of the Chinese nation. The inheritance and prosperity of Qingyang Long Opera is not only related to the future of opera art, but also to the maintenance and development of cultural diversity.

2 The historical origin of Long Opera

2.1 Background of origin

Qingyang is located in the eastern part of Gansu Province, has always been a multi-ethnic coexistence and co-prosperity of the place, multiculturalism for the generation of Long Opera provides a rich resource. Although the name and concept of Long Opera is a new type of opera in the Chinese theater family, it has been inherited in Longyuan for a long time. In the past, when farming leisure time, the ancient working people through the shadow play and other forms of entertainment, enriching their spiritual life, which laid a solid cornerstone for the birth of Long Opera. Dating back to the Tang Dynasty, shadow play has been prevalent in the folk, loved by the public, and with the passage of time, shadow play continues to integrate local characteristics, and gradually formed a unique regional style of performance.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the rise of the opera improvement movement to the revolutionary base area of the theater activities of the thriving, Longdong region of folk theater has experienced far-reaching cultural changes, Long Opera's predecessor of the "Daoqing opera" from the initial shadow play to the stage, with the same period of time across the country, other forms of theater in general and gradually by the people's form of entertainment transformed into an important means of political propaganda.

2.2 Development history

In the 20th century, Long Opera underwent many artistic changes, and after the founding of New China, it was highly valued and vigorously supported by the state, becoming an indispensable cultural symbol in Gansu. At the same time, the performance forms of Long Opera are also more diversified, including traditional singing, reciting, acting and playing, as well as modern dance, acrobatics and other elements. In terms of music and singing, Long Opera has also absorbed the essence of other opera music and formed its own unique music style.

In February 1959, Gansu Province set up the provincial opera theater daoqing troupe, launched a new play *Fēng Luò Chí* (The Pool of Fallen Maples), and went to Beijing to participate in the ten-year anniversary of the founding of the country

ceremony performances, by leaders of the party and the state of the high praise. In December, in the return of the banquet, the provincial government of Gansu Province will be daoxiang opera named Long Opera, the daoqing troupe changed to the Gansu Long Opera Troupe. Long Opera Troupe.^[1] And then *Fēng Luò Chí* became the founding work of the Long Opera, an opera genre.

As the process of modernization accelerated, opportunities and challenges emerged simultaneously. Deng Xiaoping put forward a series of guidelines for the development of literary and artistic undertakings in the new period became the theoretical foundation for the reform of the cultural system and clarified the direction of the development of the cultural undertakings. He emphasized that he should not confine himself to the portrayal of heroes, but pay more attention to the lives of the common people, "The performance of heroes and the labors, struggles, and sadnesses and joys of the common people, the lives of the moderns and the antiquarians, all should be reflected in literature and art."^[2] In 2006, Long Opera was approved by the State Council to enter the national intangible cultural heritage list, once again attracted the attention of the government and people's attention, after several generations of Long Opera workers in Gansu, the persistent pursuit and hard work, from the protection, inheritance and development of several aspects of the start to do a lot of work. They are not only in the artistic expression of the new, but also in the repertoire on the content of the rich expansion, closer to the pulse of the times and people's lives. Gansu Long Theater has successively created and arranged such plays as *Guāné QíngGē* (Love Song of the Official Goose), *XīXīa ChángGē* (Song of the Western Gorge), *KǔLè CūnGuān* (Bittersweet Village Official), *DàYú ZhìShuǐ* (Dayu Ruling the Waters), and *DàHé DōngLíu* (The Great River Flows East), which not only include traditional folk stories, but also new plays reflecting the reality of the society and the changes in history. In this evolutionary process, Long Opera artists have continued to explore and innovate, giving new life to this ancient art form.

3 The artistic characteristics of Long Opera

3.1 Musical singing

The mood music of Long Opera is taken from various folk songs and folk tunes as the theme material, which is secondarily composed and arranged by the composer, and different works are orchestrated according to the orchestra and the scene of use.

The singing of Long Opera is rich and varied, with a unique flavor. Plate singing is the core of Long Opera singing, it is based on the music of Daoqing, inherited the Longdong Daoqing in the plate, qu plate, well spring trinity of music system, its expression to the rhythmic changes in the plate drive music and singing. China's western music development and interpretation practice has proved that, no matter what kind of vocal system, have always followed the basic principle of the opera plate rhythm alternating, contrasting changes.^[3] The more distinct the rhythmic contrast between different vocal cadences and plate styles, the more significant the dramatic tension contained in the music, and the central position of the singing voice in the dramatic performance is consolidated. On the other hand, if the dramatic nature of music is weakened, the artistic charm of the theater will also be discounted. The musical structure of each kind of drama creates its unique artistic style as well as the shaping and conveying of dramatic expression, which is also crucial for Long Opera. The traditional style of Long Opera is mainly divided into "playing board" and "flying board". Therefore, "Long Opera art in creating their own set of singing music program, throughout the "first perfect in the plate, after the fast and slow plate differentiation" the creation of the plate on the basis of the principle, to find out the "traditional plate derived from the emerging plate" rules and correspondences, such as (playing plate), "the traditional plate" and "flying plate", "the traditional plate", "the traditional plate" and "the flying plate". On the basis of the principle of creating boards, we find out the laws and correspondences of "traditional boards generating new boards", such as (spring boards) becoming (flying boards), (flying boards) becoming (two-six), etc., and then hatch out (slow boards), (two-six), (tight boards), (loose boards), etc., and create new boards.^[4] "Playing board" is the soul of the Long Opera music board system. In the Long Opera's commonly used music plate, in addition to the "spring board" and "flying board", the rest of the plate because of the consideration of the integrity of the repertoire and the diversity of the singing voice, to a large extent, borrowed from the Qinjiang-based other operatic repertoire.

3.2 Forms of performance

The Long Opera's performance mode inherits the essence of shadow puppetry performances, but also incorporates innovative interpretive techniques. The actors incorporate the unique flavor of shadow puppetry into their movements, such as exaggerated stances and sculptural hand gestures. In addition, the genre has absorbed the performance techniques of other operas, shaping a distinctive artistic style. In terms of stage presentation, the play focuses on the portrayal of characters' inner emotions and the creation of a dramatic atmosphere, utilizing smooth dance steps, realistic expressions and rhythmic demeanor to present the storyline.

3.3 Content of the repertoire

Long Opera has a rich and colorful plot and covers a wide range of subjects. They not only include classic plays tracing ancient historical stories and myths and legends, such as *FēngLuòChí* and *XīXīa ChángGē* (Long Song of the Western Gorge), but also include modern plays reflecting the current situation of local people's lives and depicting folk customs and traditions. While inheriting and promoting traditional culture, these works follow the pace of the times, reflecting the life and thoughts of the people in various periods. Take *DàHé DōngLiú* as an example, the play skillfully integrates the anti-Japanese feat of "sheepskin rafts racing warships" with the regional characteristics of Lanzhou, Gansu Province, which not only shows the depth of history, but also retains the local flavor.

4 Current status of the development of Long Opera

4.1 Specialized theatre groups and performances

Currently, there are several professional Long Opera troupes active in Gansu, which not only perform frequently in the local area, but also penetrate into the neighboring areas to bring wonderful Long Opera performances to the local residents. For example, the Gansu Long Theater has created and rehearsed plays such as *DàYú ZhìShuǐ* and *DàHé DōngLiú*, which have not only been well received locally, but have also been invited to tour around the country, and have achieved good social reactions and evaluations.

In addition, some art groups with provincial and municipal titles and levels benefit from the "National Art Fund" and government support, and every year they launch new productions and arrangements, or hold selected performances of classic plays during important holidays and specific dates. However, due to the fluctuating number of performances and projects, many troupe members have to actively contact other levels of Qinqiang groups and perform in rural areas to broaden their sources of income.

4.2 Status of human resources training

In the talent training this key link, Qingyang Long Opera is encountering many challenges. The current situation, committed to training Long Opera talent institutions and training institutions are few, which limits the source of professional talent channels. It is reported, Gansu Province, the only open Long Opera music and performance of undergraduate institutions for Gansu Province Art School (Lanzhou College of Arts and Sciences Arts Vocational College). However, in the face of the severe situation of the domestic job market, many troupes have raised the educational requirements for actors to bachelor's degree and bachelor's degree, which has led to many actors who have studied opera since childhood to serve in troupes as temporary workers due to lack of education, despite their high skills. On the other hand, many actors with bachelor's degree in opera performance, due to the short period of study, professional ability is still insufficient, which makes the Long Theater troupe in the selection and employment of actors in the dilemma.

Qingyang City is located on the border between Gansu and Shaanxi, and the local culture, customs and language share many similarities with Shaanxi. In addition, Long Opera, as a new type of theater, has a limited influence compared to the Qinqiang, which is widely circulated in northwestern China. As a result, almost all of the actors and actresses of the major Long Opera troupes in Gansu Province come from Qinqiang backgrounds, and 80 percent of the practitioners are local people from Qingyang. In addition, due to the Long Opera performing art of long-term training and practice has strict requirements, the training cycle is longer, which reduces the enthusiasm of young people to learn Long Opera, the problem of talent gap is increasingly prominent.

4.3 Marketing and social awareness

In terms of marketing, the Long Opera has been inadequately publicized, and although it has a certain degree of local popularity, it is less well known in the wider region. The impact of modern media and entertainment has gradually weakened the influence of Long Opera in society and culture, and social awareness of its value needs to be further improved.

5 Challenges to the development of Long Opera

5.1 Impact of economic factors

Shortage of funds is one of the important problems facing the development of Long Opera. Troupe operation, repertoire creation, talent training and so on need a lot of financial support. At present, the government investment is

limited, the market financing channels are not smooth, resulting in the development of the troupe in the process of facing a lot of economic difficulties, affecting the quality of performance and the level of talent training.

5.2 Impact of cultural pluralism

With the development of globalization and cultural diversification, modern forms of entertainment such as movies, television and network dramas have had a great impact on traditional opera. The younger generation is more inclined to accept fresh and fashionable forms of entertainment, which makes the audience group of Long Opera shrinking and its competitiveness in the cultural market gradually declining.

5.3 Balance between heritage and innovation

In the context of rapid social change, Long Opera faces the challenge of balancing its traditional inheritance with innovative development. This issue not only concerns the survival and development of Long Opera but also reflects the broader challenges faced by traditional arts in the process of modernization.

Firstly, the inheritance of Long Opera is hindered by audience segmentation, talent loss, and changes in cultural context. Younger generations show decreasing interest in traditional operas, leading to an aging audience base and market contraction. Additionally, the long training period and low income for professional performers result in a scarcity of young practitioners. Furthermore, traditional Long Opera performances often revolve around historical stories and agrarian culture, which are increasingly disconnected from modern life, making it difficult to resonate with contemporary audiences.

Secondly, Long Opera faces numerous contradictions and challenges during its innovation process. Overemphasis on "modernization" risks diluting its characteristic stylized performances, thereby diminishing its uniqueness. Integrating modern stage technologies (such as multimedia, sound, and lighting) while preserving the aesthetic essence of traditional operas remains an exploratory endeavor. Moreover, differing acceptance levels of "innovation" among traditional opera enthusiasts and younger audiences may lead to artistic ambiguity and a lack of unified aesthetic standards.

6 The value of Qingyang Long Opera culture

6.1 Historical and cultural values

Qingyang Long Opera is a living fossil of the history and culture of the Gansu region. Through its repertoire, music and performance, it can provide an in-depth understanding of the social customs, people's life and ideology of the Gansu region in different historical periods. It carries local historical memory and is of great significance to the study of the cultural development of Gansu region and even the whole northwest region.

6.2 Artistic aesthetic value

From the artistic point of view, Long Opera has a very high aesthetic value. Its unique music and singing, beautiful performance form and rich repertoire content bring the audience a unique audio-visual enjoyment. Its artistic characteristics blend the simplicity of folk art and the elegance of opera art, enriching the artistic treasury of the Chinese nation.

6.3 Educational value

Long Opera can be used as a local cultural and educational resource to carry out cultural and educational activities in schools and communities, and to cultivate people's sense of identity and pride in their hometown culture. At the same time, through the story content of Long Opera, it can convey the educational significance of morality and ethics, which has a positive influence on the growth of young people. Through vivid performance forms, these educational contents are made more deeply rooted in people's hearts.

6.4 Social values

At the social level, Qingyang Long Opera has the function of uniting social forces and promoting social harmony. It is the common cultural memory and emotional bond of the local people. During traditional festivals and cultural activities, Long Opera performances are able to promote exchanges and unity among community residents and enhance social

cohesion. As a cultural activity, Longju opera not only enriches people's spiritual life, but also promotes the harmonious development of the community and enhances mutual understanding and recognition among residents.

7 Qingyang Long Opera culture protection and inheritance recommendations

7.1 Strengthening government support and financial investment

The government should increase the support for Qingyang Long Opera, increase special funds for the construction of troupes, repertoire creation, talent training and other aspects. At the same time, it can be guided by policy to encourage social capital to participate in the development of Long Opera, broaden the financing channels, and provide stable economic security for the development of Long Opera. The government's support is not only reflected in the funds, should also include policy concessions and promotion, in order to improve the social status and influence of Long Opera.

7.2 Talent training and education system development

Long Opera requires a development model that combines "living inheritance" with "creative transformation." In terms of systematic protection and inheritance, digitized archiving (such as audiovisual recording, musical notation arrangement (musical scorearrangement), and oral history collection) can be used to preserve classic performances and the skills of veteran artists. Additionally, collaborative training models between intangible cultural heritage (ICH) inheritors and universities can ensure the authenticity of performance styles and musical patterns through a "master-apprentice" approach. To establish a perfect system for training Long Opera talents, to open relevant majors or courses in colleges and vocational schools, and to cultivate professional performers, creative writers, musicians and other talents.

7.3 Innovative development and market expansion

Innovate on the basis of maintaining the traditional characteristics of Long Opera and create more excellent plays by combining the needs of modern society and the aesthetics of the audience. Utilize modern technological means, such as multimedia, virtual reality, etc., to enrich the performance forms and dissemination channels of Long Opera. Strengthen the market promotion, combined with tourism and cultural industry, to create the cultural brand of Qingyang Long Opera and improve its market competitiveness.

7.4 Social promotion and cultural popularization

Increase social publicity, through the media, network and other channels, publicize Qingyang Long Opera culture. Carry out popularization activities of Long Opera culture in schools and communities, so that more people understand and love Long Opera. By organizing Long Opera Festival, exhibitions, lectures and other forms of cultural activities, to increase public awareness of and interest in Long Opera. At the same time, the use of modern means of communication, such as network live broadcasting, video sharing, etc., so that more people can easily access to the art of Long Opera, to create a good atmosphere and improve the social influence of Long Opera. For example, collaborations with short-video platforms (such as Douyin (TikTok) and Bilibili) can promote "One-Minute Long Opera" challenges, leveraging algorithms to precisely target audiences in northwest China.

In conclusion, the survival and development of Long Opera hinge on achieving a balance between preserving its core identity ("shou hun" (lit. 'protecting the soul,' referring to preserving cultural essence)) and breaking into new markets ("po quan" (lit. 'breaking out of the circle,' referring to expanding appeal)). By combining systematic protection with creative transformation, Long Opera can ensure its artistic value is preserved while adapting to contemporary society. Only through such efforts can this ancient art form transition from being a "museum piece" to a vibrant cultural practice, continuing to thrive on the Loess Plateau.

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